

Michael J. Beezer House
308 Logan Blvd.
Llyswen Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5901

HABS
PA
7-ALTO,
119-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MICHAEL J. BEEZER HOUSE

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO.
119 -

HABS No. PA-5901

Location: 308 Logan Blvd.

Date of Erection: 1895

Architects: Michael and Louis Beezer

Description: Because this house and its mirror image at 306 Logan Blvd. (HABS No. PA-5900) were the homes and offices of architects, and therefore "models" of a professional level of design expertise, these residences together represent conformity to a suburban ideal of rich, historically laden ornamentation creatively selected from a conservative vocabulary and applied according to a rigid grammar of "good taste." The historical model is English, in the spirit of the late Victorian gentrification of rural medieval cottages. This two-and-one-half-story Queen Anne cottage has a steeply pitched side gable roof with three identical hipped dormers at the attic story. A second-story hipped dormer with modillions and diamond-paned casement windows is set into the roof with a balcony and simple balustrade. The prominent front gable with token cornice returns completes the ell of the second-floor plan. Shingles on the face of the gable curve into a triple window divided by Doric pilasters, with a curved wood sill beneath. At the peak of the gable is an elaborate elliptical window. The variety of windows, in fact, is the home's chief ornament. The north gable end has a Palladian window at the peak, cathedral windows crowned by wide entablatures at the second story, a finer elliptical window than the one on the front of the house, and a 6'-tall, arched stained-glass "art" window illuminating the stairwell. The first story has a brick veneer, and a broad frieze of swags, garlands, and dentil trim encircles the house at the cornice line. The entry, set back under the roofline at the northeast corner, has a leaded-glass bay window and leaded glass in the sidelights and transom window. A small terrace extends across the front of the house. Much of the original interior is intact, including the custom woodwork of the stairwell, the wide window moldings downstairs, and the mantels of the three fireplaces (although whatever extended above the mantel in the main parlor has been removed). The original glazed tile remains in the fireplace surrounds but not in the hearths, except in the master bedroom. At some point, probably during the 1940s, interior doorways were modernized into plaster-finished arches. The original plan had three rooms and a hallway on each floor, with an upstairs bath. The original back porch has been enclosed and made over into a kitchen.

History: In 1895 architects Louis and Michael J. Beezer, twin brothers, built mirror-image houses side by side on Logan Avenue, at Nos. 306 and 308 (HABS Nos. PA-5900 and PA-5901). The brothers lived at these addresses until 1899. They also designed the passenger station at 218 Logan Blvd. (HABS No. PA-5898) for the Altoona Suburban Home Company, and from the way their cottages were featured both in catalogs of their work and promotions for Llyswen, it is clear that the homes were intended as models for the new suburb as well as advertisements of the brothers' designing skills. In 1900 both houses were sold by the county sheriff to satisfy unfulfilled mortgages. Patrick William Finn, the contractor who probably built "The Cottages," as they came to be known, acquired the house at 308 Logan Ave. from the Beezers' creditors in 1903, several years after he had moved to his own grand house at Ant Hills near Hollidaysburg. The 1904-05 city directory shows John T. Finn, general contractor and owner of Peerless Manufacturing Company, and Thomas Finn, an invalid, residing at this address. Jane, Nellie and Katherine Finn, and James B. Finn, bookkeeper for P. W. Finn, are listed as boarders. When Patrick Finn went bankrupt in 1910, the house changed hands twice before it was purchased in 1912 for \$5,000 by Rebecca J. Potts, wife of Cyrus Potts, agency superintendent for Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York. He also owned the Llyswen Motor Car Company at 96 Logan Ave. When Rebecca Potts died in 1926, her husband and daughter Stella transferred the property to another daughter, Edna, wife of Ralph E. Bell, listed as an inspector in the 1930 directory. Ralph remarried after Edna's death in 1935 and continued to live in this house until 1944, when he sold it to Lewis Earl Savage, district plant engineer for Bell Telephone Company. Savage had previously owned the house at 317 Coleridge Ave. The present owners, who bought the house in 1970 from Enola Savage, Lewis Earl's widow, have done much to preserve what original character of the house remains. They have taken special care to preserve the many unique windows, which are almost completely intact.

Sources: Maps: 1909, 1920, 1932, 1951. City directories. Tax records. Deed books: 106/503, 125/542, 141/227,

MICHAEL J. BEEZER HOUSE
HABS No. PA-5901 (Page 2)

196/54, 197/236, 201/548, 207/440, 347/350, 444/301, 474/87, 492/259, 906/371, 976/167. Mortgage books: 66/122, 49/398. Beezer Brothers' catalogs: 1897, 1899.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. An overview of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and an overview of Llysven (HABS No. PA-5787) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also the Louis Beezer House (HABS No. PA-5900) additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Kathy Edwards in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Edwards's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.

MICHAEL J. BEEZER HOUSE
HABS No. PA-5901 (Page 3)

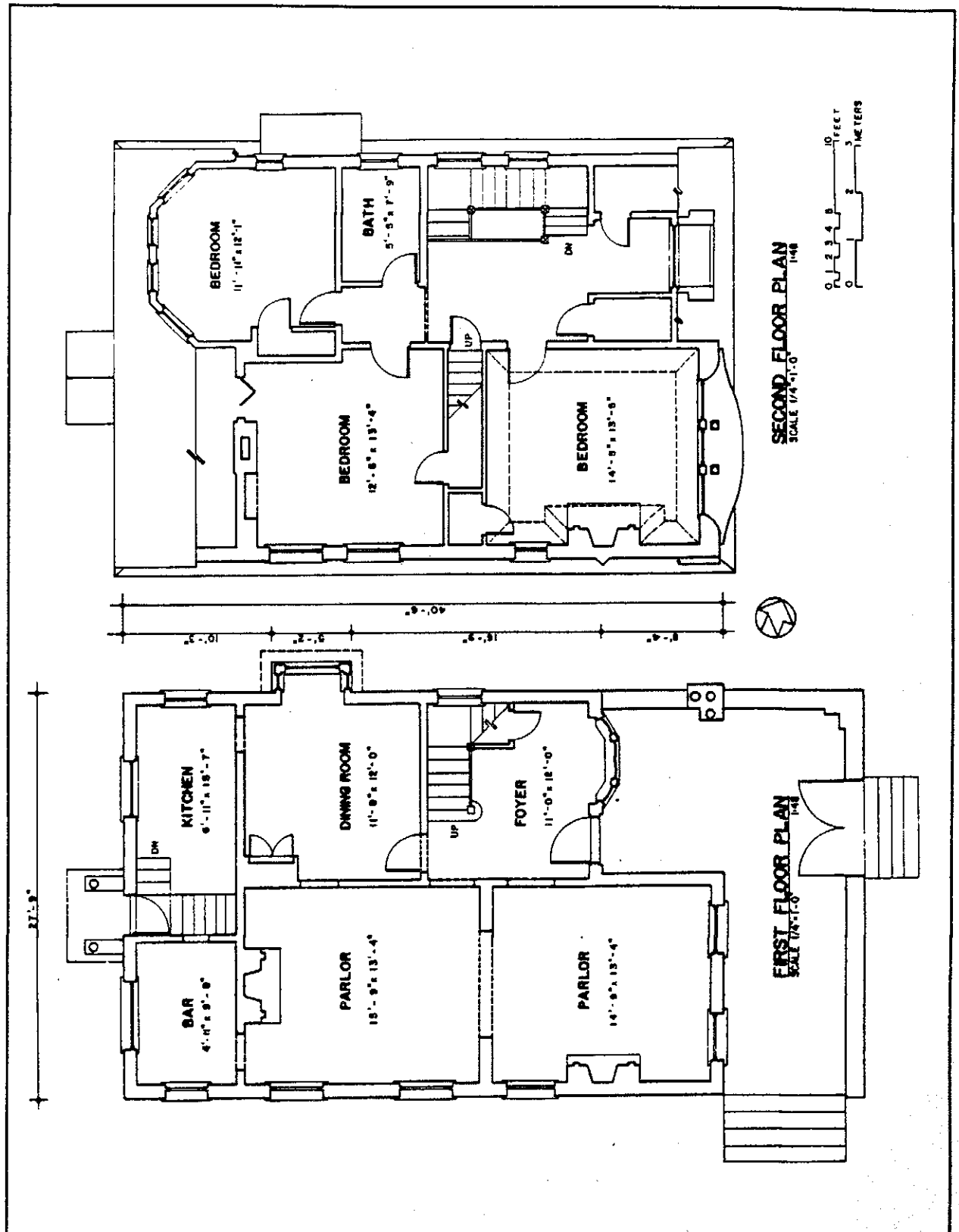


Fig. 1.1 First- and second-floor plans. Drawn by David A. Macharola.

Addendum To:

MICHAEL BEEZER HOUSE

~~Livewell Neighborhood~~
308 Logan Boulevard

Altoona

Blair Co.

Pennsylvania

HABS No PA-5901

HABS
PA
7-ALTO,
119-

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-1727